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# SUID-AFRIKAANSE BIBLIOTEKE

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No. 2

## READERS' ADVISORY SERVICE, ADULT EDUCATION AND THE AMERICAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

by

RENÉ F. M. IMMELMAN

*Sub-Librarian, University of Cape Town*

*(Continued from No. 1)*

In most public libraries, the patrons following a reading course are granted additional privileges, *e.g.* books may be retained longer than the regulation period and usually the next book is awaiting the reader at the Readers' Adviser's desk when he returns the first. This is very necessary in order to enable the Readers' Adviser to keep in constant touch with the reader and check up on the results of lists supplied. The Readers' Adviser deliberately compiles the reading course to suit the particular needs of an individual and this educational service of the public library differs in this respect from that of other educational agencies.

The Readers' Adviser needs some general reference tools and book evaluation aids <sup>1</sup> on an adjacent shelf and usually has one or two books lying on his desk, hoping thus to tempt a patron to read it or use it as point of departure in chatting to the inquirer. The books kept on nearby shelves generally include those mentioned by Emma Felsenthal in her *Readable books in many subjects* (American Library Association, 1929) or by Sigrid Edge in *Books for self-education* (A.L.A., 1938). Such a small group of books seems to make selection much easier for many people. The service given by the Readers' Adviser will in all probability create a new type of demand

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<sup>1</sup> For fuller discussion see : Farquhar, Alice M. Tools for the readers' adviser. (In : *Library journal*, 1930. p. 1008-10); and Flexner, Jennie M. The readers' adviser needs modern tools. (In : *The Booklist*, 15. December, 1937. p. 135-38).

on the book stock of the library and this is a question which the library executive has to consider. Not to be able to supply certain books when requested may do the library definite harm and damp the enthusiasm of the patron at a critical stage in his attempt at self-education.

The Readers' Adviser needs to collect as many annotated bibliographies, reading lists and book reviews as possible. He also has to keep several copies on hand of all lists compiled. How are such reading lists compiled? Naturally the client must first be interviewed in order to ascertain what is required. This entails some knowledge of human psychology and also mastery of the technique of interviewing. The part the public library is going to play in the life of the particular individual often depends on the success of the Readers' Consultant in gaining the confidence and respect of the patron at their first contact. The interviewer should not pry, or adopt too interrogatory an attitude. He uses any book that lies about to drop naturally into conversation about books and leads the client on to tell of his taste in reading matter. Often magazines read will give a better clue to reading abilities and tastes than anything else. The Readers' Adviser has to adopt a happy blend of the diagnostic interviewing technique of the medical practitioner with the guidance interviewing methods used by the teacher. It is necessary to concentrate on the person before him, to show interest in his problems, be sympathetic, tactful, patient and encouraging. The element of being too busy to give much time is damaging, yet there should be no undue waste of time. The interviewer wants to do as little talking himself as possible, not to adopt a patronizing attitude but rather that of a leader among equals. Information is not recorded in the person's presence, but every attempt is made to discover the educational background, any previous reading done, reading interests, and motives for wishing to embark on a course of guided reading. Usually a book is handed to the client to take away with him. Rarely is a reading list given at the first contact.

After the interview a record is made of the interview in order to be able to keep track of the individual's progress. At the Cleveland Public Library the following information is recorded on a 3" by 5" card: name, address, age, race, education, occupation, interests, request, reading plan, reference aid, date; the back of the card is reserved for any other comment by the Readers' Adviser. Any remarks the reader makes during the course of his reading, either on the course or on individual books, is also recorded. In this way the public library is busy building up a valuable mine of information about its readers, for the patrons of the readers' advisory service usually represent a cross-section of the community. The personal interest taken by the Readers' Adviser has stimulated most people to finish the course, especially being advised of, and being able to obtain, the next book promptly when called for.

It is not necessary that the books be read in the order listed, this rather depends on the reader's reaction after reading each book. The aim is to help people to find out what they want to read, and encourage them to learn to choose books for themselves.

The actual compilation of the reading list or course depends entirely on the immediate request. The first objective is to orientate the individual by a general survey of the field of interest; furthermore the books should not discourage the reader by being beyond his ability, but yet be sufficiently difficult to give him a sense of accomplishment. The approach to the compilation of reading lists needs to be psychological rather than logical, and rarely are more than 4-8 annotated items included. The Readers' Adviser builds up an annotated subject file of any books which are likely to be useful at any time for such lists and a record is kept of all books consulted in the course of compiling an individual list. A great deal of use is made of study programmes, reading courses from other libraries or university extension classes, study outlines or bibliographies. A pamphlet file is usually maintained, and a pamphlet is frequently found more useful, because it gives up-to-date information or treats of subjects on which the library owns no books.

On what subjects are lists requested? For instance, a brilliant young medical man wanted to do some non-medical reading. It was found he was interested in music, so a course of reading on music and the appreciation of music, called *Books for the music-lover* was prepared. The doctor was enthusiastic about it, bought some of the books for himself and ten other people who heard about it from him, have asked for the same list. Lists are requested on all manner of topics: e.g. freedom of speech and of the press; diet and health; democracy—its origin, growth and future; beauty culture; social and rural background of Austria; women in journalism; nursing as a profession; labour to-day; a booklist for practical printers; salesmanship; short story writings; the social and economic scene depicted in modern novels; about ourselves, readings in personality development; your vocabulary; your future career; etc., etc.

In many cases, such as at the New York Public Library, the Readers' Adviser dare not undertake very much publicity for fear of being swamped by requests.<sup>1</sup> Frequent use is made of bookmarks placed in books issued for home-reading from the circulation desk. At the Public Library, Rochester, New York, the following leaflet admirably characterizes the service offered:

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<sup>1</sup> Flexner, J. M. and Edge, S.A. *A Readers' advisory service*. N.Y.: Amer. assoc. for adult education, 1934.

"The Readers' Adviser is a librarian freed from the pressure of answering questions in order to be at leisure to discuss with people their individual reading problems. She gives PERSONAL READING GUIDANCE to those who feel the need of unity and purpose in their reading. By means of a reading plan many people fill gaps in their educational background. Others improve themselves in their jobs. Others lay the foundations for understanding new subjects. Since everyone differs in interests, purpose and background, each reading plan is different. The plan is made following a conversation with the individual and mailed to him after careful thought has been given to the selection of books. All are invited to use this service freely."

Cleveland Public Library draws attention to its readers' consultant service in the following words :

"We can become acquainted with the peoples, the places, and the important interests of this world of ours through the systematic reading of books in travel, philosophy, biography, history, literature, the arts and the sciences. Reading plans on these subjects may be had in the Readers' Adviser's office of the main library.

Consider this a personal invitation to visit the office and make use of its services. This free consultant service may help you find more enjoyment in your reading."

In Cleveland the readers' advisory service is advertised by means of an attractive poster in the main entrance, just behind the inquiry desk—this poster is frequently changed. In this Library small gummed stickers, 1" by 2", are often pasted into books issued from the circulation desk, with words to this effect : "If this book proves interesting, you may enjoy other books on a reading course of which it is a part. Ask the Readers' Adviser about it."

New York Public Library distributes a leaflet *The Book that leads you on*, and goes on to ask :

"Are you interested in systematic reading ? Would you use a reading list made for you, based on what you have previously read ? Do you know how to use all the resources the Library provides for your assistance ?"

Every possible attempt, however, is made to bring this service to the notice of educational and social groups in the city. In the New York Public Library system the books are not issued by the Readers' Adviser at the central library, but the list is posted to the reader and he obtains the books from the nearest branch library. In the branch libraries readers' advisory service is available at definite times announced on a noticeboard. The result has been a much greater participation by the library in community activities in the neighbourhood and increased use of books.

In the closer contacts with readers and their needs, which has resulted from the institution of this more intensive readers' service, one problem has confronted the Readers' Adviser, *viz.* that of finding suitable books. People of very varied educational background and intellectual attainments are turning to the American public library to-day, very often stimulated by the federal adult education programme, *e.g.* farmers' vocational education and Works Progress Administration education scheme. Many people have only been casual readers. The problem confronting the American librarian is to produce books which will hold the initial interest of this new class of reader and to stimulate them to further reading. Readable books with an adult approach are urgently needed dealing with topics of the day. It is not a question of providing reading matter for illiterates, but for that large section of the population "who, because of gaps in education, loss of habit of reading or unfamiliarity with certain subjects, desires easy, readable approaches to many fields of knowledge".<sup>1</sup> Readable books are required which communicate and interpret facts of a social, political, scientific and technical nature. The objective is to increase the number of readers of books on serious subjects. The readable book caters for the educated non-specialist, who wants to read outside his own particular field. An attempt is also made to interpret large fields of knowledge in non-technical language:<sup>2</sup> the *Headline* books of the Foreign Policy Association; the American primers, published by the University of Chicago for the Civilian Conservation Corps; the National Home Library of Washington; Ilin's *New Russia's* primer; and the new series on current topics just being published by Macmillan, New York. The fact that publishers are taking an interest in this practically unexploited field and are co-operating with the Readability Laboratory at Columbia University and other interested bodies, should produce interesting results in a year or two when the purely experimental stage has passed—results of immense importance to the American librarian.

In the course of this sketch of the readers' advisory service in the American public library, it has become clear that the Readers' Consultant needs to be an experienced librarian, to have a wide knowledge of books and to be well versed in dealing with human beings. In addition, he must be familiar with the field of adult education and educational methods. That the readers' advisory service in the leading American public libraries has succeeded in attracting just such people, speaks volumes for the future of this re-orientation of the public library to become in very truth "an institution that will have an even greater future when it shall boldly take to itself the

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<sup>1</sup> Edge, S. *Books for self-education*. Chicago: A.L.A., 1938. *Preface*.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Gray, W. S. and Leary, B. E. *What makes a book readable*. Chicago Univ. Pr., 1935; and Felsenthal, Emma. *Readable books in many subjects*. Chicago: A.L.A., 1929.



leadership in adult education which it alone is capable of developing, and shall make itself over into a people's university, sound bulwark of a democratic state."<sup>1</sup>

(Concluded)

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<sup>1</sup> Johnson, Alvin. The Public library—the people's university. N.Y.: Amer. assoc. for adult education, 1938.



PROBLEMS OF THE SMALL LIBRARY<sup>1</sup>

by

JANET W. ASHENHURST

When I was asked to speak to you to-night on problems of a small library I was told that I could mention the unsolved problems as well as those for which we had found a solution. Thinking this over I came to the conclusion that the only problem which we are continually striving to solve without finding an adequate solution is how to make £1 do the work of £2. We strive to counteract this by economizing in every way, but I suppose this problem is not wholly confined to small libraries.

When a difficulty arises which seems insuperable to the librarian and committee of the small library they should not be afraid to seek advice from librarians of larger institutions, who can render them valuable assistance if they will adjust their outlook to the restricted financial conditions of those desiring their help. I have always found the larger libraries only too willing to give help and advice whenever they have been approached.

As a rule an assistant trained in a small library develops the questioning mind of one trained among experiments and tends to become self-reliant by having to solve his or her own problems; moreover, he is not usually bound by hard and fast rules which lay the emphasis on routine and may lack imagination and adaptability. It is simplest for me to deal with my subject by telling you about a few of the problems which we have encountered at our library at Wynberg during the past year and to indicate how we have managed to solve them. These problems are after all common to all small libraries.

We recently moved our library to a new building and took that opportunity to pay particular attention to the problem of *oversight of the issuing desk* when only one of the staff is on duty. There are often periods in a small library when one member of the staff has to work alone, and as her time will not be wholly occupied with issuing, she will have other work to do such as processing and typing which it is not advisable to carry out in full view of the public. To enable us to continue our work in the office and at the same time to keep an eye on the issue-desk and the library generally we had a sliding glass window placed between the office and the outer library. This ensures privacy for the staff whilst proceeding with their

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<sup>1</sup> Paper read before the Cape Branch of the S.A.L.A. at the South African Public Library on 22. August, 1939.

work, and means that readers are not disturbed by the noise of the typewriter. When the office is being used for sub-committee meetings it can be made completely private by means of a curtain drawn over the communicating window.

We have tried various ways of attracting new members to the library, such as advertising periodically at the local picture-house and circularizing the district, and at least these methods usually pay for themselves. Perhaps our most useful move in this direction was to give all children of subscribers *free* use of the Juvenile Section. This gives an incentive to children to read and encourages them to form the library habit in their youth, while it also encourages non-members to join the library for the sake of their children. In the past we have found that however small the children's subscription might be it acted as a definite deterrent to juvenile readers, and a good deal of time and expense was incurred in collecting their small payments each month. The experiment proved a great success and our juvenile members, who now number 200, use the library very freely now that they are not afraid to change their books because their subscriptions are overdue. Grown-ups, strangely enough, are apt to use the library even more freely if their subscriptions are overdue! The library also benefits because parents with children very rarely leave the library—probably they would be sadly pestered by their children if they did. Then many non-members are induced to join the library because of the envious complaints of their children "that little Johnny next door is getting free books".

*Reserved books* were apt to cause much heart burning at one time because they were not available for inspection by subscribers until many weeks had passed. In those days they were kept under the issue-desk and when a subscriber saw a book being handed out from this cache he at once jumped to the conclusion that "here was a flagrant display of favouritism". It often involved the staff in endless assurances "that no book was kept for anyone unless previous application had been made and the notification paid for", but very often some germ of scepticism still remained despite all our efforts. This system of keeping a handy supply of books under the counter does rather commend itself to members of the staff as they know that they will have to procure books for several subscribers who happen to send messengers during the session. It can be argued that this saves a certain amount of time, particularly when the staff are busy, as they can at once put their hand on a couple of nice books without having to leave the desk unattended while they institute a search for suitable literature.

Stung into action one day by repeated inquiries from subscribers as to "how to become a favourite" we decided to place all reserved books out on the shelves where they could be seen and inspected by everyone, and in

order to accomplish this without any great expense we simply had a glass door placed over a couple of our existing shelves. For the first few weeks we had to keep the door locked and remove the books on application in order to stem the rush on these new books making their unwonted appearance, but as soon as members understood the working of the new system they were given free access to these shelves of reservations, and now they operate it themselves by removing their own books after receiving their notifications. Each book in this cupboard bears the name of the subscriber who reserved it and the date on which the notification was sent so that it is evident to all that no book is reserved for anyone longer than the stipulated 48 hours.

At one time in making these reservations we used to write them all down in a book and attempt to memorize them, a most unsatisfactory proceeding which is still in vogue in some libraries to-day. Our present method is simple and effective. We write all the particulars directly on the notification card and file it in the tray in alphabetical title order which enables the necessary posting to be done immediately the wanted book returns to the library. This method also shows clearly which books require duplication through sustained popularity. Before these notification cards are filed away the required book-card is found in the issue tray and a paper-clip slipped on to the book-card. We prefer the paper-clip to any kind of additional card because the clips indicate immediately when a reserved book becomes overdue and this can be dealt with at once. We find that if the dates on which the reservations are made, are placed on the cards when they are bespoken, this obviates future arguments since the staff always have conclusive proof of exactly how long anyone has waited for a certain book.

Small libraries sometimes have some difficulty in dislodging their clients during the periods when the library closes for a short time each day. I remember the time when we used to start obviously tidying-up the periodicals on the tables and pushing chairs about five minutes before closing time, hoping that this would have the desired effect, but anyone immersed in books and magazines can be quite blind to polite shufflings going on around him, particularly if he is not in a hurry to go home. Eventually we devised a simple way of overcoming this difficulty by installing a vigorous electric bell at a negligible cost which we ring for a few seconds before we want to close the library. This has proved to be very effective and only on rare occasions is it necessary for members to tell us "that they thought it was a bicycle bell in the street"! I have seen other methods in use to emphasize closing time such as dimming the lights or a member of the staff calling out "closing time, please", but I do not think such methods are very satisfactory.

Like many others before us we used to use a time-honoured *suggestion book* which suffered from the one great disadvantage that it gave no privacy.

In fact it often made amusing reading for other subscribers, if someone had jotted down some facetious remarks in addition to his book suggestions. It was also no uncommon thing for one member to criticize another's suggestion adversely with "I'm surprised at Mrs. So-and-So wanting *that* book" or some such remark. Moreover it wasn't very encouraging for everyone to see now and again from the column for committee's remarks that certain books had been turned down. Eventually this lack of privacy seriously damped the enthusiasm of members wishing to make known their requirements, and suggestions began to flag until we thought of a better plan of instituting individual suggestion cards which are placed in a locked box upon completion. These cards have the advantage of being able to be placed before the Book Committee without any list having to be prepared as was formerly the case, and the Committee now place their decision on each card, thus completing it for posting immediately after the meeting.

We find that the most satisfactory way of bringing new books to the notice of subscribers is to place all the dust-jackets in a scrapbook, as this can be kept up to date from day to day and although we type the usual monthly list of new books the scrapbook is more commonly used. Scrapbooks made to hold 882 covers can be obtained for 6s. We also paste all the resumés from the dust-cover in each book as this saves the time of the staff in telling members "what the book is about".

If a small library has no available wall space for display purposes I can recommend the purchase of a piece of ordinary *garden trellis* which can be lifted round to any position and provides space for displaying pictures, maps, or book-covers for the grown-ups or children, and has the advantage of taking up very little room when closed up for storage purposes.

To prevent permanent *notices* becoming faded and fly-blown and to give them a more artistic and less forbidding appearance I print them on three-ply wood with a poker-work set, thus enabling us to keep the notices clean by washing them with soap and water, whenever necessary.

There exists a feeling amongst readers that some kind of classification of fiction would be extremely helpful but not many small libraries can afford to print lists of authors who usually write a certain type of book such as detective, historical, wild and woolly west, romances, etc. Whilst we, at Wynberg, are not able to supply individual lists on account of the expense involved I have prepared a classified book under the various headings for general use in the library and it is a great stand-by for the staff as well as the readers, because instead of rattling off a dozen authors of sea stories with whom the subscriber is probably unfamiliar, and which he could not remember in any case, we lead him to the classified fiction book and he studies it at his leisure, or carries it round the shelves as he makes his choice. Quite

a number of non-fiction works are interspersed with the fiction in these lists and in this way they also come in for a little extra attention. I have often thought that a small pamphlet could be designed to meet this need which would be suitable for all the libraries in the Peninsula and if each library took a number for distribution the combined cost of printing would not be very great. Each library could have its own name on the outer cover and it should be fairly simple to find authors who are represented in every library whose works fall under broad headings such as Adventure, Romance, Detective, Historical, Sea Stories, etc. Another way of grouping books on chosen topics and bringing them to the notice of readers is by means of miniature displays. These are proving a great success at Wynberg and we have already re-circulated 1,400 from our display-table over a period of 5½ months. Each month we exhibit an attractive poster with a few miniature models showing the type of book which is being re-introduced by the display, and the display-table draws members like a magnet leading to a rapid clearance of the books on view which are then replaced by others. This year we have displayed books on Gardening and Country Life, Sea Stories, Mystery and Detection, Travel, and at present we are showing Historical books. The models lend themselves to ingenuity on the part of the staff and local firms will often assist, as in the case of our Gardening display when we were lent a large sheet of imitation grass, and the Detective series when the Head Constable of Wynberg kindly supplied certain grisly exhibits, which were greatly appreciated.

A problem which is more acute at small libraries with their more limited funds is that of deciding what books to buy every month. We try to supply our readers with any books which are in demand irrespective of the views propounded therein or whether we feel personally that they have little literary merit. If two sides of a question are put forward by competent writers we procure the books of both and place them on the shelves. Our only censorship is as regards downright pestiferous matter; in fact we try to supply books of every class and type although we do endeavour to keep the standard reasonably high. The high ideals of the public library service and the limitation of its funds combined, provide a good reason for the authorities to refuse to include any but the best in their stocks. The refusal of libraries to absorb large quantities of trashy novels has doubtless contributed in a certain degree to the establishment of commercial libraries, because publishers and those interested in exploiting these indifferent works have had to find some means for their unrestricted distribution. Have library authorities been justified in their attitude towards this kind of literature? The situation is well summed up in a special report on this question as affecting public library work in England in which the following passage occurred :—



"The influence of the commercial libraries will, I believe, ultimately result in furthering our interests, just as the growth of the Public Library in the nineties alarmed the booksellers who to-day acknowledge that they have greatly benefited through increased interest in books, brought about by Public Libraries."

If the commercial libraries make more people real readers these readers should eventually gravitate to their local libraries for the wider and better stock of books which should be available there. This does not mean, however, that we can afford to sit back in self-satisfied complacency waiting for the fruit to drop into our mouths. There must be continual examination into methods and policy to keep pace with changing conditions and requirements. Public libraries may not consider that it is their function to provide unlimited quantities of light literature but the provision of an adequate supply of good fiction is decidedly one of their main functions. Shortage of funds often makes it a problem at a small library to supply sufficient duplicates of works which are enjoying a transitory popularity, particularly when one knows in some cases that in a matter of six months' or a year's time the books in question will very rarely be read by anyone. That is a position which the small libraries must face, however, if they wish to retain their subscribers and it would be short-sighted economy not to supply an adequate number of copies of every universally sought-after book of the moment.

Librarians of smaller libraries can by personal contact with their readers endeavour to spread a desire for good literature. By courtesy, tact, and a pleasant manner they can achieve much, and if they are cheerful and friendly this atmosphere will soon permeate the library so that readers will thoroughly enjoy coming there, and will know that they will always be assisted by the staff very readily in any doubt or difficulty. This intimate personal attention is probably much more called for in a small library than in a large one, although the need for great tact in handling occasional intractable subscribers is present in both.

Red-tape in a small library should be unknown. Emphasis should be laid rather on what members *can* do than on what they are forbidden to do, and every effort should be made to convince readers that the administration is willing and anxious to co-operate to benefit them in every way possible; only by so doing shall we give them the initial encouragement to approach us with trust and confidence.

The service is personal, and as such permits of various judicious "lapses" from rules and regulations. What may be necessary in a large library tends to produce an atmosphere of restraint in a smaller library. Although records must be kept and figures watched, time should also be found to develop the human side, and the library, the service, and the public will be the richer for it.



## THE MARKETING OF IDEAS

by

ANTHONY THOMPSON

*University of Cape Town Library*

The librarian, like a business man, is a salesman, and he can learn much from the skilled shop assistant. The shop assistant is engaged in selling goods, while the librarian is engaged in selling ideas; and like any other business man he is interested in selling as many as possible of the right things to the right people. Ideas, like goods, sell best when the product is good, the price is low, and the salesman is skilled in fitting the goods to the customer. So, we librarians have three ideals to keep before us: firstly to provide good books, secondly to make libraries free, and lastly, and most difficult, to train our assistants to be good salesmen. The first two of these ideals are followed systematically by most librarians; the third is usually left to chance.

I happened to enter a small library the other day, and asked for some information. The assistant was reading a magazine, and had a cup of tea at her side. I coughed and asked somewhat timorously whether I could obtain any books about Smyrna. Looking up slowly, bored and sleepily puzzled, she said: "I'm afraid I don't know who Smyrna was."—In that moment the wealth of knowledge stored in that library seemed to shrivel to nothing. The books were so much paper and cloth and the thoughts in them died.

A good salesman can breathe life into his stock. He can make the customer feel that his resources are vast in quality and quantity, and that when his own stock fails he can telephone to headquarters for anything that the customer's present whim may demand, from a pearl to a pumpkin.

So must it be with books.

Librarians must learn to be good salesmen. They should look upon salesmanship as a skill which can be acquired only by experience and the careful study of the supply of, and the demand for, ideas. I strongly recommend that a book on business salesmanship should be included in the list of textbooks for the S.A.L.A. examinations. The British Library Association course, on which the South African course is based, does not include one in its list of study books; but surely this should encourage us all the more to lead the way and to include this vital subject in our course of training.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Both Syllabuses recommend J. Stephenson's *Principles and practice of commerce*. Pitman. 1930. 8s. 6d. [Ed.]

James W. Fisk, in his *Retail selling*, devotes four chapters to personal salesmanship, in which he gives some useful advice. After discussing "The salesman himself", and describing a number of sterling personal qualities as indispensable, this book proceeds to discuss "Knowing the merchandise" and "Studying the customer".

The salesman himself must be almost superhuman. He must have an abundance of energy, intelligence and charm, and must care for his health better than an athlete. "If . . . your intimate knowledge of yourself does not confirm you in the belief that you are worthy of attention, become so at once . . . But . . . being self-confident does not mean that you will try to impress the customer openly with your belief; on the other hand, you should try to make the customer feel that he is the important one." Having thus acquired sparkling health and the self-confidence that accompanies it, the salesman must proceed to study his stock. For this purpose it would help library desk assistants if there were a staff meeting every week or every few weeks, at which the librarian could discuss new books with his staff and useful information from all members of the staff could be pooled. And "gossip" about readers can be of great use to assistants in helping them to get to know their customers. In business all the assistants are regularly given "stock instructions", and the skilled shop assistant is constantly studying the habits and needs of his clients.

When the oldest inhabitant comes into the library, looking more decrepit than ever, and asks in shaking tones for something to read, only the most thoughtless of assistants will offer him *Sy kom met die sekelmaan* or a girls' school story. And when Mrs. Ackermann, the butcher's slow-witted wife, comes in with her little Jannie, aged seven, and asks for a book of advice about backward children, only the most inhuman of librarians would show her to the shelf labelled "Abnormal psychology". It may very well be necessary for this dear lady to take her boy to the children's clinic, and the librarian who is bright enough to be able to suggest this, and even to give her the address to go to, is doing the job well of fitting the right idea to the right person. Besides knowing his stock the library assistant should make himself familiar with other sources of information and aid in the town in which he works. The skilled shop assistant is usually able to direct customers to other departments of his own store, and often to other stores in the neighbourhood where a certain article may be procurable.

Now some of you will accuse me of setting you an impossible task, and of expecting you to know everything. It is all very well for a shop assistant who is selling goods, not ideas, and is usually selling only one "line". But the librarian must be conversant with all knowledge; he must be a living encyclopaedia, information bureau, and a psychologist as well. It certainly

is a hard task, but it can be tackled by carefully guided study. The librarian can do much by reading the daily newspapers selectively, as well as some weeklies and monthlies, to broaden his outlook. As well as the daily newspapers he should read *Ons eie boek*, *The Forum*, and *Kort en goed*, and perhaps one of the American digests of articles selected from world literature. Two of the English Sunday papers publish book reviews of a very high standard: the *Observer* and the *Sunday Times*, both published in London every Sunday. All these sources of information, and many others besides, can help the willing library assistant to know his own stock and to keep abreast of new ideas.

All this knowledge is needed to enable the librarian, like the business man, to fit supply to demand, to recommend the right ideas to the right people. Mr. Fisk, in his chapter called "Studying the customer", says: "When we come to know people intimately, we can come nearer to pleasing them in every instance." The librarian must seek to please, but he must do it subtly. The shop assistant often succeeds by appealing to vanity, by standing back from her customer and admiring the expensive overcoat that she hopes to sell to her. Sometimes the librarian, too, may have to appeal to vanity, but there are other emotional appeals which the librarian, as an idealist, will, I hope, choose in preference: curiosity, the desire for security, the need for help in personal problems, and many others. All these are different motives which cause a reader to come and look for a book. The librarian's job is to "diagnose" the reader's desire to read, and so to satisfy that desire the more completely.

Now some of you librarians who have visited the United States will contradict me, and say that the library is there, not to satisfy blind demands of the public, but to educate the people. The librarian, if he is clever, can surely do both.

To conclude, too much time is spent in our libraries on routine work and the mere care of stock, and far too little time is spent on salesmanship. If a salesman in business paid as little attention to his customers as some library assistants do, he would sell nothing and get the sack. Librarians should not only make it their business to get to know their stock thoroughly, but they should also study the habits and interests of their readers. They should learn to recognize at once what are a reader's motives in wanting to read, and so be ready to help them intelligently, flatter them if necessary, and above all to make them think that the library which supplies them with books is able to satisfy all their needs. The marketing of ideas is more subtle than the marketing of millinery or groceries, and a study of personal salesmanship should, therefore, repay all librarians,

## LIBRARY NOTES AND NEWS

**Bloemfontein.** *Public Library.* From the *Annual Report* :—

	1937-38	1938-39
Circulation	94,537	95,424
Accessions	3,516	3,725
Members	3,149	3,416

A resolution has been passed by the Town Council in favour of a Municipal Free Library as soon as the necessary funds are available.

*Young people's subscription scheme.* In order to help young people who have outgrown the Children's Library, but who do not yet earn enough to be able to afford a library subscription, the Committee has introduced a special scheme whereby any young person under the age of 21 may borrow books from the Library at the cost of 1d. per book. Only one book may be borrowed at a time. Recommendation cards, which must be signed by the employer, school principal, or the Children's Librarian, are available at the Library on application.

*Philatelic Society.* The Philatelic Society has housed all its books and journals in the Library in a special locked bookcase which they provided. Only members of the Philatelic Society may borrow books, but members of the Library may consult them in the Library.

*Non-European Library Service.* Great progress has been made in the last year in the Non-European library services that the Library administers with funds provided by the Carnegie Corporation. Boxes of books are sent to eight centres in the Free State, and books are also lent to the Maseru African Library in return for an annual grant of £5 from the Basutoland Education Department. At the Bloemfontein Location the Reading Room established at the end of last year has proved very successful. In response to numerous requests, it has been decided to issue the books housed there for home reading. About £12 p.a. is spent on newspapers and periodicals which attract many readers to the Reading Room daily. There are now nearly 3,000 books in the Non-European Libraries section.

*Children's Library.* The Librarian contributes the following :—

The members of the Bloemfontein Children's Library have opened a correspondence with the members of the Children's Corner, Metropolitan Borough of St. Pancras.

Letters from St. Pancras have proved full of interesting news of library doings and have included plans of London and of the Children's Corner.

The letters are not written by individual members of the Library but after the last letter from St. Pancras has been read aloud and then put up on the notice board, the children make suggestions of news items to be included in the answer from Bloemfontein. The letter is finally drafted in the presence of a group of members and signed by as many of the children as possible.

The Bloemfontein children have been interested to learn that English children enjoy the same books and periodicals that they do. It is now not unusual for a child to say when returning a book, "I enjoyed that, we must tell St. Pancras about it".

The correspondence with St. Pancras was only started a few months ago and is still at its early stages but it promises to become a very popular library activity.

**Boksburg.** *Public Library.* The new library building was opened by Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr, M.P., on 19. August. The building cost the Town Council about £16,000, and expenditure on the lay-out of the grounds and equipment is expected to bring this total up to £20,000. We hope to publish a description of the library in a later issue.

**Boshof.** *Public Library.* With the assistance of various public bodies and private persons the library was made free to the public in April this year. (*The Friend*, 11. April, 1939).

**Johannesburg.** *University of the Witwatersrand Library.* On 3. May, Mr. de Simonin Minister Plenipotentiary for France, presented to the University a gift of between 700 and 800 books from the French Government.

## FREE LIBRARIES

*by*

M. M. STIRLING

"For Culture like her Sister Happiness is not to be forced. The more swiftly we pursue her the farther she recedes, the more ardently we woo her the more distant she becomes."

Probably no word in our South African vocabulary has been more abused than "culture". It has indeed become associated in the public mind with political activities of the most unsavoury nature. To talk as we so lightly do of Greek and Roman and Celtic and other "national" culture is to talk nonsense. Culture is essentially universal in its application. There is no such thing as national culture. In the cultural sense to be national is to be mediocre.

The most important educational or cultural institution in any civilized country is the public library and it is in the number and condition of its libraries, and the extent to which these are used, that the status of a nation can be measured. Judged by this standard South Africa has not the remotest claim to culture. Over 98 per cent. of our adult rural population are deprived of access to books and in the urban areas the figures are almost equally discreditable.

If there is one thing more than another on which the Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Libraries of the Union of South Africa insists, it is on the necessity for free libraries both urban and rural. We cannot compel people to read by law as we can compel them to be "educated" in the debased meaning of that word. But we can force the appropriate authorities to provide every facility for free access to books, by insisting on the establishment and maintenance of free library services. Libraries should be free in all senses and not merely in the monetary one, and no attempt should be made to force the public reading into certain channels by refusing to stock the more popular types of fiction and other dodges dear to some librarians. In this connexion our motto should be: "Give the people light and they will find their own way."

In any democracy a preponderance of ignorant and illiterate population, such as exists in the Union, is a menace to the state. That this fact has been consistently overlooked both by the Union and Provincial legislative bodies is hardly surprising. An unenlightened electorate will return to power an



unenlightened legislature. In other words a community is liable to get the Government it deserves, and, if the necessary improvement is to be effected in the backward state of South African library development, it must be done through pressure on the Government from without, by library authorities and other educated bodies.

The most common argument used against free libraries is that people do not appreciate what they get for nothing. The argument is demonstrably untrue; its premises are false. In the first place the free library does not give away books. It merely lends books, purchased with the people's money and the property of the people. It gives people free and equal opportunity to help themselves. In the second place the free library is appreciated by the public to a far greater extent than the subscription one. The following are the figures for South African libraries which have been converted from subscription to free institutions:—

<i>Library</i>	<i>Date of Becoming Free</i>	<i>Membership as Subscr. Library</i>	<i>Membership to-day</i>
Johannesburg	1924	4,200	36,000
Pretoria	1933	1,800	8,400
Benoni	1933	1,970	2,840
Brakpan	1929	180	2,070
Durban	1937	3,750	13,500
Springs	1937	1,210	2,700
Germiston	1937	2,880	4,140
		<u>9,990</u>	<u>69,650</u>

Total increase in membership since the above libraries became free—59,660, or nearly 600 per cent.

The first step in the conversion of a subscription library into a free one is naturally the conversion of the library's committee. When this has been achieved the committee will have to convene a meeting of the library subscribers to discuss the proposed change in policy. Probably more than one general meeting will be necessary before the subscribers agree to accept the free library principle and to hand over the library property and all library assets to the Municipality. The final step, and probably the most difficult one, will be to persuade the Town Council to take over the library as a municipal institution and to agree to maintain it as such.

Generally speaking it should be possible for a free library to cater for twice the membership of a subscription one without any increase in expenditure. So that, until the library membership more than doubles itself, all that the Municipality will be called upon to pay will be an amount equivalent to the loss of subscriptions.

The free library may be administered as a municipal department, or sub-department, with a committee consisting entirely of Town Councillors, or it may be administered as a separate institution under a committee,



appointed by the Town Council, consisting of people (not necessarily Town Councillors) interested in library work. In the latter case the library will receive a municipal subsidy to cover the estimated expenditure each year, and the library will continue to function much as before, except that there will be no subscriptions. Any monies received from other sources, such as provincial grants, country subscribers, fines, etc., will either be handed over to the Municipality or else deducted from the estimated annual expenditure. Since the library will have no town subscribers the necessity for holding annual meetings will disappear. Annual reports accompanied by audited statements of accounts will be forwarded to the Town Council, which becomes the library authority directly responsible to the citizens for the conduct of the library.

In calculating the *minimum* annual expenditure required for a free library, when well established, an amount equivalent to two shillings per head of the town's European population should be estimated. The expenditure should be incurred roughly as follows :—

Salaries	50%
Books & Periodicals	30%
Other	<u>20%</u>
	100%

The staff should consist of the librarian *plus* one assistant for every completed five hundred borrowers.

In libraries with over five hundred borrowers the pocket system of issuing books, such as is to be found in most of the larger South African libraries, should be introduced. It can be installed at comparatively little cost.

All residents of the town and all non-residents employed in the town (including school children) should be eligible for free membership of the library. In order to safeguard books a deposit of say 5s. from adults and 2s. 6d. from children may be required, or instead, a rate-payer's guarantee may be accepted, or even a simple reference to two prominent citizens.

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## THE CONCEPT OF REGIONALISM AND STATE ASSISTANCE IN RELATION TO LIBRARY SERVICE

*by*

I. M. MURRAY

In view of the general backwardness of public libraries in South Africa it is important that we should take careful note of the salient features of the growth of the library systems in other countries, more especially when there are obvious lessons to be learned from them. One of the most striking of such features is the transition from the idea of the purely local and independent library, serving a small community, to larger administrative units striving to reach all the inhabitants within a given county, province or state. The object of this paper, therefore, is briefly to consider some of the principles involved in regional development and to survey progress in a few of the countries that lead in this respect. Such an analysis should assist in clarifying some of the larger issues we have to face in this country ; and it should help us to deduce what immediate practical steps are necessary for the attainment, as an ultimate ideal, of "nation-wide" library service.

Historically, the Californian county library system, which dates from as far back as 1898, is probably the earliest example of a systematic attempt to build up an integrated library system designed to cover the whole area of a state, and attempting to reach a scattered rural population. Yet California remains an isolated pioneer until after the Great War of 1914-18, when the tendency to develop larger units of service became so pronounced and, once started, continued to gain momentum. This, of course, is merely an aspect of a general tendency in public administration, which is due in no small measure to the development of communications and the breaking down of regional isolation. So far as the social services are concerned, the incentive is in the first instance to equalize the benefits of, and opportunities offered by, such services. In particular, larger units of service have become necessary when the taxable capacity and wealth of different communities, regions, or provinces vary considerably, though from the broad national point of view it is desirable that the service in question should be evenly spread. In the second instance the principle of larger units has been put into practice in order to eliminate waste and duplication of effort and money.

Here there naturally arise the fear of bureaucracy, excessive uniformity and the danger that too great a degree of centralization of control will damp local initiative. But as regards library service, theoretically the obvious advantages of integration far outweigh any disadvantages, and even with a completely centralized administration it is still possible to decentralize the service itself in the sense that the book-stock and the staff can be dispersed throughout the region so that they can be actively in touch with the public.<sup>1</sup> The spread of the book-fund over a wider field of literature when the financial resources of formerly independent units are pooled, the elimination of unnecessary duplication of titles not in constant demand, the concentration of all business details, cataloguing, classifications, and similar work at headquarters, with a consequent division of labour made possible, and lastly the fact that the services of expert assistants can be made available throughout the region covered, are all factors that must result in greatly improved service.

There are many other advantages as well. By means of regional integration greater mobility of the book-stock can be attained, *i.e.* collections of volumes can always be shifted from one point where they have been read to another where they are likely to find new readers, and the combined literary resources of all the libraries can be placed at the disposal of each individual within the area. Moreover, the preparation and distribution of booklists and catalogues on a wide range of subjects of interest to the residents throughout the area becomes possible, and at the same time covers a far wider range of material than any independent library could ever hope to house. With the spread of education and the increasing application of knowledge to occupations and industry the literary needs of all but the very large and wealthy towns have grown far beyond their capacity to cater for alone. Finally, it is only when large administrative units come into being that libraries can be established, as part of the larger system, in small communities which, through lack of effective initiative and leadership or financial resources, have been unable to establish and maintain a library of their own accord. Or again in cases when such small libraries have been established, but as is usually the case, ultimately become moribund, it is only by integrating them into a system that they can be infused with new life.

Undoubtedly practical experience bears all this out. When Professor W. G. S. Adams wrote his memorable report in 1915, notwithstanding the fact that the public library movement was already more than sixty years old in Great Britain, he found that less than 2.5 per cent. of the rural population

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<sup>1</sup> Osborne, E. Decentralization in county library administration. (In *L.A.R.* 3. ser. 2: 169-76, June, 1932).

had access to library service. "When it is further remembered", he stated, "that a very considerable number of the libraries in the small towns and parishes are little more than libraries in name, it is plain to how slight an extent the public library movement has reached the smaller towns and country villages."<sup>1</sup> Two hundred libraries, considerably more than one third of the total number of rate-supported libraries, had an income of £200 or less and 281, or approximately one half of the total number of libraries, had an income of £350 or less per annum. From the Adams Report it is apparent that the library position in England in those days much resembled ours to-day. After a careful study of conditions the author of the report emphasized that if an effective library system was to be provided it was essential to secure a statutory enlargement of the library district.

On this basis the county library systems of Great Britain have developed. Thanks in the first instance to financial help from the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees and subsequently to the County Library Acts, which constituted the County Councils library authorities, the growth since 1919 has been remarkable. Slowly but surely the smaller libraries have been, and are still being absorbed into the larger units, and the service throughout the areas concerned has been improved beyond recognition and widely diffused. Naturally in many cases a considerable degree of resistance to absorption, due to local jealousy and pride, has been and is still being encountered, but that is gradually breaking down since the advantages of becoming part of the larger system have been demonstrated so clearly. County librarians to-day are unanimously of opinion that towns with a population of 30,000 or under are not in a position to maintain and provide efficient service and should be absorbed by the larger authority.

Actually in Great Britain the relationship of the independent library in the small community to the larger unit has developed in two directions. Firstly, the small borough may arrange on the basis of an annual payment for a loan collection of books from the county stock. This means two things. In the first instance its own cash fund can be devoted primarily to the acquisition of good standard works; in the second place it means the ample and ever-changing supply of the lighter forms of literature. The second alternative is the complete amalgamation of the urban service as a branch of the county service, the local authority divesting itself of its library powers and being rated for library purposes by the county. The latter alternative has yielded striking results and is clearly the line of future development.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> A report on library provision and policy by Professor W. G. S. Adams to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees. Edinburgh, 1915.

<sup>2</sup> Mitchell, J. M. The Library movement in Great Britain. (In *A.L.A. Bulletin*, 26; 474-78, April, 1932).

county library systems of Lancashire, Derbyshire and Kent, which are probably the most effective of their type to-day, have evolved on this principle and exemplify completely concentrated control. All the public libraries within these counties, whether they are housed in their own buildings, rural schools or village halls (but excluding the larger city libraries) are administered as distributing points or branches of the county headquarters.

In England and America the transition from local to larger units of service has been a comparatively easy matter, corresponding as it has done with existing units of government, *i.e.* from the borough to the county. In the case of prosperous counties, such as those mentioned above, this step has proved highly satisfactory, as well as in California where all the county libraries again have been brought into relationship with one another under the supervision of the state library. The remainder of the counties in Great Britain and America have, however, not been so successful, and to-day in both countries there is an ever-growing movement in favour of the assumption of responsibility by the state for the future growth and development of library service. This entails financial subsidies from the central treasuries in order to bring the quality of the poorer services up to the best, or to develop service where it does not yet exist. Time has shown at least that local initiative and the example of others, upon which so much reliance has been placed in the past, are useless factors when communities are economically or in any other way backward.

Financial assistance from the state carries with it supervision and inspection and, in the interests of economy and better service, the utilization of subsidies to encourage the integration of libraries on a regional basis. (Obviously the granting of subsidies to small independent units, as is done for instance by the Provincial Council of the Cape, is little short of sheer waste). Opinion is very much in favour of the adoption of such a scheme in Great Britain. Those concerned with the county libraries there, one and all, and those who are in a position to take a detached view of the whole scene, such as the Director of the London School of Librarianship and the Secretary of the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees, are solidly in favour of state subsidies and the creation of a state library department.<sup>1</sup>

Such a department would, by the nature of the service, fall under the Ministry of Education. On the Continent libraries are invariably the concern of the departments of education and in Great Britain the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction in 1919 strongly recommended

<sup>1</sup> Mitchell, J. M. and others. State control & state aid for libraries. Gravesend: A. J. Philip, 1937. Also: Headicar, B. M. The Library of the future. London: Allen & Unwin, 1937; and: Hill, J. W. F. The Trend of library policy. (In *L.A.R.* 39: 629-30, Dec. 1937).



that the existing public libraries should be brought into touch with organized education. Contemporaneously the county libraries in England were placed under the control of the county education committees with the most satisfactory results, and this arrangement has made possible the closest co-operation between the library systems and the schools. Not only have the school libraries been reorganized, or in many cases even organized, by expert librarians, but also the rural schools have been made the points from which isolated small communities or rural folk have been reached. Professor Adams' claim that "such library facilities would bring a new power and influence into the hands of the teacher in the rural community, and, with the education authorities sympathetic to the movement, there may swiftly be spread through the whole country a public library service the effects of which for good it would be hard to overestimate" has been amply proved in cases such as Derbyshire. To-day the resistance to any form of state control comes only from the municipal librarians, who fail to see the situation as a whole.

In Denmark both the principle of regional development and the assumption of responsibility by the state have been accepted and put into practice with outstanding success. The modern Danish library system, which is of comparatively recent growth, is often referred to as the model for other countries. In no way is it lop-sided like the American or our own system in the sense that certain regions develop and progress whilst others remain stagnant, but has developed as an organic whole to cover the entire country, under the supervision and direction of the state library office at Copenhagen, which again is subordinate to the Ministry of Education. The head of the department, which is known as the *Statens Bibliotekstilsyn*, who is an expert on library affairs though not actually engaged in practical librarianship, acts in an advisory and executive capacity for the Ministry: amongst other duties he computes and apportions the government grant, sees to it that such grants are properly applied and generally acts as an inspector and adviser for the whole system.<sup>1</sup> He again has an advisory board consisting of the librarians of the Royal and University Libraries at Copenhagen and one or two others to support and assist him with advice on general policy. For library purposes the country has been divided into thirty regions. The rural school and smaller town libraries have been grouped round the largest town library within each region, which for that purpose is created a "central library" and receives a special grant from the state over and above local sources of revenue, as for instance from the municipality and county. Actually the integration and concentration of control within each region is

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<sup>1</sup> In his office, too, the Union Catalogue of all Danish libraries is compiled and inter-library loans are effected,



not as complete as in the case of the best English county systems, and a considerable amount of local autonomy and control over local revenue is allowed the village and small town libraries. Further consolidation, however, is being striven for and is likely to be attained in time when local jealousy has been broken down. The country, of course, is sufficiently thickly populated and distances are short enough to permit it.

So far as South Africa is concerned we are all aware that we have reached a stage when far-reaching changes are necessary if we are to build up a library system adapted to the country's needs and covering the whole area. Mr. Kritzingar recently re-emphasized the backwardness of conditions in this country, pointing out that only 4 per cent. of the European population have access to public library service. Of the 260 or so independent libraries scattered over the country probably 90 per cent. are moribund and can hardly claim to perform any significant service. A great many of them, too, are threatened with extinction owing to the competition from commercial lending libraries which are springing up all over the country and supply purely "recreational" English literature to the public.<sup>1</sup>

There is obviously very great need for effective propaganda in order to enlighten those who have a voice on the councils of government regarding the social significance of library service, and in order to induce our schools to attempt to equip the population at an early age with a love of good literature and a technique of reading for information. But these problems are beyond the scope of this paper. Arising from the above survey, however, three questions present themselves.

<sup>1</sup> A sharp distinction must naturally be drawn between library service and the book service of the commercial libraries. The latter are steadily invading the country—even in trading stores in the most distant parts of the Cape collections of fiction will be found, supplied at 2s. 6d. for 50 volumes per week, by a large commercial undertaking. The success of such enterprise does at least indicate that the reading habit is growing, and that there is a fertile field for public libraries to exploit. So does the following letter, which is typical of so many that appear regularly in the local Afrikaans press :— Waarde Heer, Mag ek gebruik maak van u blad om 'n beroep te doen ? Bo-op die berge tussen Humansdorp en Steytlerville, afgesonderd en alleen, woon 'n gemeenskap van tussen vyftig en sestig huisgesinne op die bosbou-nedersetting van Otterford. Aanraking met die buitewêreld gebeur selde en die mense moet hulle genot en plesier self soek. Ofskoon hulle maar 'n karige loon ontvang, het hulle bymekaar gekom en 'n leeskamer opgerig. Maar wie kan boeke koop uit 6s. 4d. per dag as die huisgesin nogal groot is ? En tog smag hulle na leesstof—veral nou geskiedkundige boeke wat van die heldedade en ontberings van die Afrikanervolk vertel, want hulle is Afrikaners in merg en been en hulle harte kloep warm vir die Afrikanersaak, want hulle is van die wêreld afgeskei. En daar is honderde kindertjies, seuns en dogters, wat smag na leesstof. My versoek is : Wie gaan hierdie klompie ware Afrikaners daar bo in die berge help ? Menige boeke wat klaar gelees op die rakke lê, sal verslind word hier in die afgesonderde berge ; menige kind wat 'n geliefde boek ontgroeit, sal honderde hartjies verbly as hulle die moeite doen om die boeke in te pak en te stuur aan die Welvaartbeampte, Otterford-nedersetting, P.K. Loerie-stasie. Hier is 'n kans om 'n goedkoop maar baie waardevolle geskenkie te gee wat 'n daadwerklike bydrae sal wees tot die opbou van ons volk waarvoor ons nou so diep voel en waarvoor ons so baie praat. Met dank aan almal wat gehoor gee aan hierdie oproep. P.O. Sauer, Stellenbosch. (*Die Burger*, 13. 12. 1938).

Firstly there is the question of regional development. When I was in America, authorities who had been in this country and the Secretary of the Carnegie Corporation expressed disappointment that nothing had been done to promote systematic development on the lines suggested by the Pitt and Ferguson Reports. They knew only too well that our only hope lay in that direction if we were not to see good service in certain areas, on the Rand for instance, and only the shadow of service, or none at all elsewhere. The more recent report of Munn and Barr on the New Zealand public libraries, which apparently are much in the same plight as our own, stated emphatically that "the stagnation and rot which has infested the county libraries could be cured and an era of progress set going *by a system of larger units of service*."<sup>1</sup> Our own Interdepartmental Committee adopted Ferguson's recommendation and proposed that "a number of existing large town libraries be organized as *Regional Libraries* to supplement, within areas assigned to them, the services provided by smaller libraries". But that the Committee did not conceive of such an arrangement as a permanent basis on which to integrate the libraries into larger units of service, but merely as a temporary device, is apparent from their lengthy quotation, on the same page (p. 12), from the English Public Library Committee Report, to the effect that "one of the objects of the scheme may well be to stimulate such an appetite for reading that a local area is not satisfied till it has provided a library of the ordinary kind for itself; but the provision of such a library should, so far as finance is concerned, be the business of the locality". The latter quotation was written in 1927, when the English county libraries were still in an experimental stage, and certainly no county librarian would endorse it to-day, as the whole tendency, as I have tried to indicate above, is towards larger permanent units of service. It seems a pity that the Committee, with time and resources at its disposal, did not pay more attention to the possibilities of regional development and the division of the Union into library areas. Development merely on a "provincial basis" hardly seems feasible, as the Cape, for instance, would probably have to be divided into at least four areas, with Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, East London and Kimberley as central organizing libraries, and possibly Umtata to attend to the Native schools, etc., of the Transkei. The extent to which it would be possible to integrate the libraries within given regions and similar problems have all to be faced yet. Unfortunately we have not got convenient fiscal authorities corresponding to county councils to resort to, once we get beyond the purely local body. And owing to distances, the diffusion of our population and the very unequal distribution of taxable capacity, the creation of a

<sup>1</sup> Munn, R. and Barr, J. *New Zealand libraries . . . prepared under the auspices of the Carnegie Corporation of New York*. Christchurch, 1934.

uniformly good service covering the whole country will be a difficult problem and require very careful investigation. The appointment of a National Library Board and competent library organizers for each province, as suggested by the Interdepartmental Committee, would be of very real help in tackling these problems.

But for the time being the task of librarians is to see to it that the report is not shelved and forgotten as so many blue-books are. Already it has become apparent that the Treasury has a very different conception of the state's responsibility for library service as compared with the Committee. The latter emphasized that *a strong lead must be given by the government*. This brings us to the second point, viz. the question whether public libraries would not fare better under the Department of Education than under Interior. Whilst libraries are relegated to a very subordinate position in the latter department, where, owing to the pressure of other interests, no one takes a keen interest in them, it is hardly likely that we shall have strong spokesmen in official circles. Above all things, as an immediate necessity, our libraries need influential protagonists and need to be elevated to the status of the other essential social services. It seems that our only hope of obtaining this is by the transfer of responsibility for the care and promotion of library interests to the Department of Education, where, if possible, they should be represented by an expert on all matters pertaining to libraries. Under the department in question one can be sure that the library issue will receive due attention and support. The Secretary for Union Education, the Director of the National Bureau of Education and other educationists have time and again shown their awareness of the importance of public libraries, which after all are essential if the work of the formal educational institutions is to continue to bear fruit in post-school years. Moreover, school libraries automatically fall under Education and if there is to be closer co-operation between them and the public libraries, and the rural schools used more and more as the points from which to serve rural folk, as in England, it seems highly desirable that they should be brought together under the same department. If public libraries are to win enlarged support and occupy a worthy position in society they will have to go consciously educational, in its broadest sense, particularly now that the above-mentioned commercial libraries have come to stay and have proved themselves most effective agents for circulating the lighter types of literature.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Educational, but in no sense high-brow or appealing only to intellectuals. That public libraries must adjust themselves to the educational level, the vocational interests, significant social aspirations and the backgrounds of the people is obvious. Cf. my *A Page of social history* (S.A.L. 6 : 1, July, 1938), and an important contribution by Mr. P.C. Coetzee : *Die Biblioteek in Suid-Afrika: sy kulturele funksie en organisasie*. (*Die Huisgenoot*. 22, no. 837, 8, April, 1938).

In the same way the provincial library organizers, the appointment of whom was recommended by the Interdepartmental Committee, would fall under the provincial superintendents of education where they properly belong and where they no doubt would find sympathetic help and encouragement.

The last point is the question of library legislation, which the Interdepartmental Committee did not consider necessary. Admittedly there is no need for permissive legislation as was the case in England. But if the state is now going to assume responsibility for the development of library service, constitutional provision with regard to public libraries is most desirable. Even if such legislation does not make the maintenance of rate-supported libraries by local authorities compulsory, as pertains in some countries, and as Mr. Stirling once suggested for South Africa,<sup>1</sup> it will undoubtedly stimulate local authorities to make proper provision for their libraries if they are declared by law to be an educational purpose of the state. Moreover, it would give public libraries a status they have not got at present. In the case of South Africa, too, the library law should indicate the broad lines of proposed development, emphasizing in particular that the object of state aid is to encourage the growth of a regional system as the Danish library laws do rather than the perpetuation of the independent city or town library.

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#### TO TAT

YOU naughty dog! You are imbued  
 With literary turpitude.  
 A grangerizing taste is what  
 In canines I esteem a blot.  
 How reinsert those leaves you've chewed?

I would not mind if they were lewd—  
 The plates aren't ev'n in the nude.  
 I can't think what your fancy's got,  
 You naughty dog!

What thoughts obsessed you as you viewed  
 Those quartos in their jackets rude;  
 My choicest sets of Burns and Scott;  
 My rarest Lamb's? Oh, was there not  
 Old Zimmerman "On Solitude",

You naughty dog!

J. M. T.

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<sup>1</sup> S.A.L. 3 : 49-55, Oct. 1935.

## SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION DECEMBER EXAMINATIONS

### DECEMBER EXAMINATIONS

(a) *Closing Date for Entry*

Candidates are reminded that applications for admission to the December Examinations must reach the Honorary Secretary not later than 15th October, and that entry forms must be returned to him by 15th November.

(b) *Dates of Examinations*

Dec. 4.	9-12	Elementary Afrikaans
	2- 5	Elementary Routine, etc.
Dec. 5.	9-12	Elementary English
	9-12	Final Literature I
	2- 5	Final Literature II
	2- 5	Language Tests (if any)
Dec. 6.	9-12	Intermediate Classification I
	2- 5	Intermediate Classification II
Dec. 7.	9-12	Intermediate Cataloguing I
	2- 5	Intermediate Cataloguing II
Dec. 8.	9-12	Final Administration I
	2- 5	Final Administration II
Dec. 9.	9-12	Final Administration III
Dec. 11.	9-12	Final Bibliography I
	2- 5	Final Bibliography II

### CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

Intending candidates for the Correspondence Courses next year should send in their applications to the Honorary Secretary, S.A. Library Association, P.O. Box 397, Pretoria, not later than 31st December, 1939.

*N.B.* The offering of Correspondence Courses in both English and Afrikaans in the *Elementary* and *Intermediate* subjects is dependent upon a minimum enrolment of *four* students in *each* language, respectively. In the *Final Administration* and *Bibliography* courses a minimum of *three* students is required in each language, respectively.



## (BRITISH) LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

Examinations, May, 1939

The following were successful :—

*Elementary*: Miss I. M. Jackson, Johannesburg Public Library.*Intermediate—Whole examination*: Mr. A. Thompson, University of Cape Town Library.*Intermediate—Part 1, Classification*: Miss M. E. Green, Johannesburg Public Library.*Intermediate—Part 2, Cataloguing*: Mr. H. S. Liebgott, Johannesburg Public Library.

## SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, CAPE BRANCH

*Report on the Year's Proceedings*

The Cape Branch of the S.A. Library Association was formed in October, 1938, the membership of which now totals 100. Three public meetings have been held, all of which were very well attended by the public as well as by members. At the first a paper of Mr. Ribbink's was read on *Rural libraries*. At the second Miss Ida Theron, representing the A.C.V.V., Dr. C. F. Albertyn, representing the Helpmekaar and Mr. Wigboldus, Secretary of the Openbare Hollands-Afrikaanse Boekery, described their independent efforts to distribute books amongst the less privileged and the rural communities and emphasized the great need for nation-wide library service. At the third meeting, held at the University of Cape Town, the facilities for training in librarianship formed the subject for the evening. At all the meetings keen discussion ensued.

Owing to the interest aroused at the meetings in the "free" library movement and the problem of making books more accessible to the people in the country districts, in June the Council of the Branch convened a meeting of representatives of about fifteen cultural and educational societies interested in the question. The New Education Fellowship, the Afrikaans Christelike Vroue-Vereniging, Helpmekaar, Rotary Club of South Africa and the National Council of Women typify those represented. It was agreed that independently the Cape Branch and the various societies should address letters to the Secretary for the Interior, Union Secretary for Education and the Provincial Secretary, impressing upon them the great need for improved public library facilities and urging them to adopt the recommendations of the Inter-Departmental Committee of 1937.

It is understood that the question is being discussed in official circles.

Furthermore, a propaganda committee was established, consisting of the Council of the Branch and the following: Dr. C. F. Albertyn, Miss Sarah Goldblatt, Professor A. H. Murray, Mr. Martin Potgieter, Miss Ida Theron and Mr. C. J. van Dyk. The Committee, which is due to meet shortly, will attempt to conduct suitable publicity, rouse public interest in libraries and bring pressure to bear wherever possible in responsible quarters. Needless to say the needs of the entire Cape Province are being kept in mind, and particularly those of the smaller and poorer towns or rural communities. The Branch is endeavouring to improve the service and financial support of the public libraries throughout the Cape.

I. M. Murray,  
Hon. Secretary,  
c.o. S.A. Public Library  
CAPE TOWN

## HONORARY DEGREE FOR MR. H. W. WILSON

Mr. H. W. Wilson, president and treasurer of the H. W. Wilson Company, of New York, was awarded the degree of Litt.D. by the Brown University, Providence, in June. The following biographical note is taken from *The Providence Journal*, 20. June, 1939 :—

"Mr. Wilson, was born in Wilmington, Vt., May 12, 1868, son of John T. and Althea D. Wilson. He is a descendant of Roger Williams.

He was educated at the University of Minnesota and while in college worked out the original idea of a comprehensive catalogue or index for new books that would be printed once a month and thus kept up to date.

Eventually, with the help of his wife, Justina Leavitt, whom he married in 1895, he published a nine-page pamphlet, 'The Cumulative Book Index' in 1899, and three hundred book dealers and librarians subscribed to it immediately.

This venture resulted eventually in the familiar 'Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature' and the 'United States Catalogue' which lists monthly all English-language books and gives vital information on their contents. In 1913 Mr. Wilson moved his expanding business East and in 1917 took up present quarters in the Bronx.

Every year 25,000 books, 1,450 periodicals and thousands of pamphlets pour into his clearing house to be sorted, analysed, classified and listed in printed indexes. These include the 'Book Review Digest', 'International Index to Periodicals', 'Index to Legal Periodicals', 'Industrial Arts Index', and the 'Motion Picture Review Digest', latest of the publications".

#### PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED AND ANNOUNCED

**Canadian Periodical Index.** 1938. Ontario: Public Libraries Branch, Department of Education. 1939. \$1.00.

(Off-print of the four quarterly issues in the *Ontario library review*).

**Journal of the History of Ideas.** N.Y.: College of the City of New York. Quarterly. \$4.50 per annum, \$1.40 per single copy.

Announced for early publication. The journal will be devoted to intellectual history, with special emphasis on the inter-relations of the history of philosophy, of literature and the arts, of the natural and social sciences, of religion and of political and social movements.

**Magriel, Paul D.** A Bibliography of dancing. Second cumulated supplement, 1936-1938. N.Y.: Wilson. 62 p. \$1.15.

**National Central Library, London.** Twenty-third annual report of the executive committee, 1938-39.

**Special Libraries Association, New York.** What the special library profession offers: a general survey. N.Y.: S.L.A. [1939?](Reprinted from: *Special libraries*, July-August, 1938).

**Standard Catalog for Public Libraries.** Fifth supplement. N.Y.: Wilson, 1939. Service basis.

**van Rensselaer, Alfred.** American Shakespearean criticism, 1607-1865. N.Y.: Wilson, 1939. 305 p. \$2.75.

#### SOUTH AFRICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

##### TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE

The Triennial Conference, which was to have been held in October, has been postponed on account of the international situation. It will probably be held at Easter next year.

#### Nou Gereed!

*Kinderlektuur in A'rikaans*, deur Jessie Hean. (*Suid-Afrikaanse biblioteke. Herdruk No. 7*). 1s. posvry.

'n Nuttige handleiding by die uitsoek van kinderlektuur vir bibliotekarisse, onderwysers, en almal wat belangstel in die leesstof vir kinders. Verkrygbaar by die Redakteur van *Suid-Afrikaanse biblioteke*.

## BOOK REVIEWS

JONES, A. F. *Elementary cataloguing: a textbook for the new cataloguer*. Gravesend: Philip, 1939. 54p. Paper. 3s. ("Librarian" Professional text-books, 2).

The Author is Librarian of the Accessions Department in the Manchester Public Libraries.

An introduction to the catalogue; its compilation for author, classified and dictionary forms, and describing what the catalogue should do and how it can be made to do it, etc.

SAUER, JULIA L. *Radio roads to reading*. N.Y.: Wilson, 1939. 236p. \$2.25.

Over a period of five years, the Rochester Public Library, sponsored by the Board of Education, has been giving weekly broadcasts on books and libraries designed for fifth to eleventh grade pupils.

Julia L. Sauer, Head, Department of Work with Children, has prepared this volume, containing twenty of the scripts used in those programmes which seem best to illustrate the elements that make this type of programme successful.

SEARS, M. E., ed. *List of subject headings for small libraries, including practical suggestions for the beginner in subject heading work*; 4. ed. rev. with the addition of [Dewey] Decimal classification numbers, by I. S. Monroe. N.Y.: Wilson, 1939. xxvi, 516p. \$2.75.

The chapter, "Practical suggestions for the Beginner in Subject Heading work",<sup>1</sup> in sixteen meaty pages outlines the problem, warns against pitfalls, and proposes general principles.

The preface points out and explains the considerable changes in this edition which broaden its scope and which substitute new for obsolete subjects resulting from the ever changing times.

One entirely new feature is the inclusion of the Dewey decimal classification numbers. These will aid the inexperienced classifier faced with the complexity of the Dewey system, will serve as a quick reference for the more experienced, and will tend to promote general uniformity.

At the suggestion of teachers and cataloguers explanatory notes defining the meaning and usage of about one hundred subjects have been added. These notes, while definite enough to be practical, are not too definite to limit the usage of the terms because of new phases of the subject which may arise.

The above and other additions and revisions consist mainly in new features planned to aid cataloguers rather than to increase the number of subjects. In purpose the list adheres to its original plan to be an aid for small and medium-sized libraries that do not need the complete Library of Congress list.

Subdivisions required under any city are set out under a typical one: Chicago; form divisions to be used under subjects are listed on page xxvi.

THOMPSON, J. W. *The Medieval library*. Chicago: University press, 1939. viii, 682p. 26 cm. \$5.00. (University of Chicago. Studies in Library science).

Partial contents:—The early, high, and close of the Middle Ages; Italian Renaissance; Making and care of books in the Middle Ages. (The Scriptorium; Library administration and the care of books; Paper, the book trade and book prices; the Wandering of MSS.). Historical index.

<sup>1</sup>Also published separately. 1933. \$0.50.

This handsome volume represents the fruits of many years' study, developed from a course of lectures delivered in the Graduate Library School on the history of libraries. "There exists no other single and comprehensive survey in English or in any other language of the history of books and libraries in the period of the MSS."

Ten of the twenty-one chapters have been contributed by past students of Professor Thompson.

Only the history of medieval Spanish libraries has been omitted. For the rest we may leisurely wander through those of Italy, Germany, France, the British Isles, and Scandinavia; Byzantine, Greek, Jewish, and Muslim libraries. A truly erudite volume abounding in bibliographical references, and published at a remarkably low figure.

The volume is not illustrated. We must, therefore, still have recourse to Clark, Savage, Streeter, and others.

WILSON, Martha. *School library management*; 6. ed. rev. and rewritten by Althea M. Currin. N.Y.: Wilson, 1939. \$1.25.

Completely rewritten by Althea Currin to meet the changing needs in school library methods, the new, sixth edition of Martha Wilson's *School Library Management* serves a double purpose.

Part I contains chapters of interest to the school administrator faced with the problem of initiating a library programme. Points covered are: the choice of an administrative scheme, the selection of the librarian, school library standards, housing the collection, equipment, financing and co-operative measures in the school library system.

Part II is planned for the librarian entrusted with the actual organization and management from initial organization, book selection, cataloguing and classification, repair and discard, reports, etc., to questions of service including instruction in the use of the library, service to the classroom and co-operation with public libraries.

The topics discussed are modifications or enlargements of those in earlier editions, based on questions brought up in summer classes in school library management over a period of ten years. Solutions have been worked out on the basis of practices found to be general in various localities. Appendixes provide school library standards as set forth by both the North Central and Southern associations of colleges and secondary schools, a list of accredited library schools and a supplementary bibliography.

*Library literature*; ed. by Marian Shaw. N.Y.: Wilson, 1938.

Eight periodical publications which made their appearance during 1938 and ten not indexed in previous editions are included in the new 1938 volume of *Library Literature*, edited by Marian Shaw. (524 pages. Sold on the service basis).

An author and subject index-digest to current books, pamphlets and periodical literature relating to the library profession published here and abroad, the present volume in addition to library periodicals indexes about 320 articles of professional interest that appeared in general periodicals and 361 books and pamphlets. As usual, a large number of foreign titles are included.

Books are analysed by chapter when they lend themselves to such procedure. A descriptive note or brief summary is given for articles in periodicals of wide circulation; abstracts for those in periodicals, particularly foreign, with a more limited circulation.

A new feature this year is the inclusion of masters' theses from the California School of Librarianship, the Chicago University Library School, the Columbia University School of Library Science and the Illinois University Library School.

S.A.L. is generously treated.

*Bibliographic index: a cumulative bibliography of bibliographies*. N.Y.: Wilson, 1938. Price on service basis.

Students, research workers, and librarians will welcome the 344-page, first cumulated annual volume of *The Bibliographic Index* which provides references, conveniently arranged under standard subject headings, to some 14,000 bibliographies published during 1937 and 1938.

The only systematic guide to these important reference tools available to-day, it does double service through its additional value as a catalogue that brings to light the significant material on a wide variety of subjects. Complete bibliographical entries point the way to

many otherwise unindexed lists in books and periodicals, select lists available through inter-library loan, longer, more comprehensive lists published separately and new editions, supplements, reprints of general subject, universal, national and trade bibliographies.

Three quarterly numbers and a cumulated volume are published each year. There will also be a five-year cumulated volume.

ROUNDS, Joseph B. *Research facilities of the International Labour Office available to libraries*. Geneva: I.L.O., 1939. Wappers. 70p. 2s.

In the "Acknowledgements" the author expresses his gratitude to Dr. W. W. Bishop, who suggested this study of a small, but specific phase of international library co-operation.

Chapter I concerns The International Labour Organization; II—The Library; III—The Archives and General Information section; IV—Publications. Paragraphs in chapter IV deal *i.a.* with Inter-library loans; Photostat and Microfilm service; Bibliographical work; Exchange of publications, etc.

The Library contains about 400,000 items and receives 3,610 periodicals currently.

The only two South African Libraries listed as receiving all I.L.O. publications are Library of Parliament and the University of the Witwatersrand.

The usefulness of this well-printed booklet is further enhanced by providing a bibliography and index of I.L.O. titles.

*For Distribution:* FREER, P. *A memorandum on the subject of central cataloguing including matters such as joint cataloguing and union catalogues, submitted to the Inter-departmental Committee on Libraries, November, 1936.* 9p. *Mimeographed.* A limited number of copies are available gratis.

## AFRICANA NOTES AND QUERIES

### (a) Notes

ELLIOTT COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS.—From *The Star*, 27. April, 1939 :

Senator F. S. Malan, chairman of the Historical Monuments Commission, states that the attempt to collect the money required for the purchase of the Elliott Collection of historical photographic plates has failed, and that the collection is in danger of being distributed, or sent out of the country.

"The Historical Monuments Commission", states Senator Malan, "feels that a further attempt should be made to prevent this calamity. It therefore proposes to offer the executor £2,500 for the collection, and, if this offer is accepted, to hand it to the State, to form part of the photographic department of the Government Archives in Cape Town. The archives can supply photographs from these plates, as required."

The Cape Provincial Council has contributed £1,000 and the Government another £1,000. Senator Malan suggested that the City Council should contribute the remaining £500 . . . The Finance Committee of the Council recommended that, subject to the consent of the Administrator, the grant be made and this recommendation was affirmed by the General Purposes Committee.

### INDEX TO SOUTH AFRICAN PERIODICALS

Following on their letter addressed to the S.A.L.A. (*cf.* S.A.L. 6: 181-82, April, 1939) Miss Elliott and Miss Mews, the Hon. Editors of the proposed Index, have circularized the libraries in the country, asking them to signify their willingness to subscribe to the Index on a basis of £2. 2. 0 per year. Thirty-five favourable replies were received, and further preliminary work is progressing.



## RAND PIONEERS LIST—"Domesday Book" for the Johannesburg Public Library.

A great list of names of Rand pioneers—a Domesday Book—has been prepared by Mrs. James Gray, wife of Mr. James Gray, F.I.C., the Rand pioneer, for presentation to the Library. . . . The list, filling four loose-leaf albums and running to more than 250 typewritten pages, covers the years up to the end of 1889. It was undertaken originally by Mr. James Gray, the author of "*Payable gold*", but the credit for the research and hard work connected with the plan must be given to his wife, who spent months going through Government archives and old veld kornets' registers. . . . When Mr. Gray's register was started in 1934, advertisements were placed in the local newspapers, which resulted in a flood of names being sent in, with dates of arrival. These, and the Rand Pioneers' register, formed the nucleus of the present work. Old copies of the *Volkstem* and the *Transvaal Advertiser*, both published in Pretoria, were also consulted for names. Directories, old books, letters, proclamations—all were studied by Mrs. Gray. A fruitful source of names, for instance, was a petition sent to the Volksraad, pressing for alterations in the existing Gold Law. (*The Star*, 28. March, 1939).

## SCOTT AUTOGRAPH IN KIMBERLEY

While viewing the library of the late Mr. James Tennant recently, Mr. James Ross, librarian of the Kimberley Public Library, came across a small leather-bound octavo volume entitled: "Female Fortitude exemplified in an impartial narrative of the seizure, escape, and marriage of the Princess Clementina Sobiesky, as it was particularly set down by Mr. Charles Wogan (formerly one of the Preston prisoners), who was chief manager in that whole affair. Now published for the entertainment of the Curious. London. 1722."

Across the top of the title-page appears the characteristic signature of Walter Scott, and on the front fly-leaf is the following note in Scott's handwriting: "The Chevalier Wogan, who executed this bold enterprise, was afterwards a correspondent of Dean Swift. There is something in his letters indicative of an excited imagination and an imperfect judgement. Not the less likely was he to have undertaken a desperate adventure. This tract is very scarce. 1824." Inside the cover is the inscription: "Abbotsford Library. M. 15. Duplicate." Two other signatures of later ownership show that the book was brought out to South Africa about 80 years ago.

"Here then", writes Mr. Ross, "is a most romantic chapter in the early life of the mother of Bonnie Prince Charlie, published just two years after the birth of the Young Pretender at Rome. Those 40 pages are packed with stirring incidents that occurred during that glorious love-flight of the beautiful princess across Europe in mid-winter with her devoted band of cavaliers who had much ado with their trusty blades and Irish wits to keep intriguing enemies at arm's length and win their way through." (*Diamond fields advertiser*, 5. April, 1939).

## COPYRIGHT PUBLICATIONS

The State Library has just issued, in mimeographed form a List of copyright additions acquired during 1938, being a cumulation of the monthly bulletins. This is a welcome step forward in recording, for reference purposes, material published in South Africa. The list is obtainable from the State Library, Pretoria, at the price of 5s.

The State Library has once again circularized all local publishers to persuade them to supply the prices of their publications when sending their depository copy, as this information is still far too often omitted.

SOIL EROSION—UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA—*Agriculture and Forestry, Department of. Central library.* Soil erosion: a list of books [and articles] on soil erosion, soil conservation and pasture improvement in the Department of Agriculture and Forestry. 1938. 13 p. *Mimeographed.*

## DU PLESSIS VERSAMELING

Professor J. J. du Plessis se boekery is reeds jare bekend as een van die beste privaatt-biblioteke in ons land. Die biblioteek bestaan hoofsaaklik uit teologiese boeke en Afrikaans. Die teologiese deel is 'n besonder goeie handbiblioteek wat die veelsydige belangstelling van die eienaar tenvolle uitdruk. Wyle Professor du Plessis was 'n man wat sy boeke met groot kennis en fyn smaak uitgesoek het. Sy Afrikaans-versameling

bevat 'n hele aantal besonder kosbare en seldsame werke en is o.a. buitengewoon ryk aan pamflet-materiaal. Die boeke is byna voor die voet in puik toestand.

Die waarde van die biblioteek is deur 'n bekende Kaapstadse Afrikanakundige op £4,000 gestel. Hierdie prys moet eerder as te laag dan as te hoog beskou word. Mev. du Plessis was egter so vriendelik om, op voorwaarde dat die boeke sover moontlik by mekaar sal gehou word, die versameling aan die Universiteit af te staan vir die bedrag van £3,000.

Die Universiteit is baie dank verskuldig aan haar vir hierdie tegemoetkoming, en ook aan die Carnegie Corporation of New York, wat die aankoop van hierdie kosbare boekery moontlik gemaak het. (Berig van Mnr. P. C. Coetzee).

#### DE GIDS, *Amsterdam*

Die Desember-nommer, 1938, is spesiaal aan Suid-Afrika gewy. Dit bevat geskiedkundige en ekonomiese artikels deur H. T. Colenbrander, W. J. Leyds, S. Posthuma, H. D. van Broekhuizen, en P. J. van Winter, en letterkundige bydraes deur Uys Krige.

**KORT EN GOED**: die beste artikels uit die beste tydskrifte. Johannesburg: Afrikaanse pers. Maandeliks. 15s. per jaar; 1s. 6d. per maand.

'n Afrikaanse *Reader's digest*, "bevattende vertalings van die beste artikels uit die beste Engelse, Amerikaanse, Australiese, Kanadese, Nederlandse, Duitse, Franse en ander tydskrifte, asook geleidelik Afrikaanse artikels van belang vir almal wat iets meer wil weet".

**UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA**—*Education Department. Library. Booklys / Book List, No. 1. 1939. Mimeographed.*

"This list is the first of a series which will be issued and contains books on Bibliography, Ethics, Library Science, Philosophy, Psychology, Religion and related subjects only. The next list will contain books, etc., on Education, Sociology, and related subjects." The list is arranged in Dewey order, with an alphabetical subject index, which boldly faces the problem of bilingual cataloguing by incorporating all subjects in both languages in one alphabet.

**UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA**—*Library of Parliament. Annual list of Africana added to the Mendelssohn collection. Pretoria: Government printer, 1939+. No. 1, 1938. 110 p.* In reviewing this publication in the *Cape times*, 16. Aug., 1939, Mr. Ian Murray writes: "In 1917 he [Mr. Mendelssohn] bequeathed his entire collection, which then comprised approximately 20,000 items, to the Parliament of South Africa. In his will he expressed the hope that steps would be taken to develop it into a 'national library of Africana to be held, conserved, and augmented by the Union Parliament until eventually it should comprise the greater part of the literature connected with the Continent of Africa'. The donor also provided funds for adding further books to the collection, and 'trusted that, should these funds prove insufficient, Parliament should augment the sums in the measure of the increased necessity'. This Parliament has done. In 1926 the collection was considerably augmented by the purchase of the famous Jardine Collection of Africana, which filled many former gaps, particularly as regards the earliest issues from the Cape Press. To-day material from all corners of the earth is constantly being added... The result is that there are more than 30,000 items housed in the library, all of which help to elucidate our history and problems..."

Now the first instalment of the "Annual List of Africana added to the Mendelssohn Collection", covering 1938... has been produced. This will be a yearly issue and will be provided with a full author index periodically, which should considerably enhance its value."

The usefulness of this welcome annual would be further enhanced by the addition of the publisher's name to the imprint; by a language division in the 800 class, and by an adherence to the Dewey order in 900. [Ed.]

#### (b) Queries

- Q. 5 PERTSHIRE PLOUGHMAN.** First impressions of Natal, by a Perthshire Ploughman. Edinburgh. D. Mathers and J. Menzies. 1850. 32 p.  
Mentioned in Mendelssohn. v. 2: 84. No copy in Cape Town, or R.E.S.  
Does anyone know of a copy other than the one in the B.M.?

## (c) Answers

**Q. 3 SUASSO DE LIMA.** Gezelschapsliederen; 3de bundel. Kaapstad, 1852.

Mr. Murray, Under-Librarian of the S.A.P.L., reports that there is a copy in the Grey Collection at the S.A.P.L. in original soft covers, and another in the possession of Dr. F. C. L. Bosman.

## LIBRARY NOTES AND NEWS

**Natal Society Library.** Pietermaritzburg. From the *Annual report* :—

	1937	1938
Stock. Books	54,183	55,460
" Pamphlets & Blue Books	8,850	9,453
Circulation	93,070	95,277

The Librarian is taking steps to form the nucleus of a small drama library from which sets of plays could be loaned to the many small play-reading groups that exist locally.

In December last 100 free holiday tickets were issued to certain Government schools in the city and 190 to members of the school library clubs. This resulted in an increase in issues from 752 to 1,573.

**Salisbury.** *Queen Victoria Memorial Library.* From the *Annual report* :—

	1938-39
Membership	596
Stock	18,417
Expenditure	£. s. d.
Papers and periodicals	156 10 10
Books	484 5 7
Circulation	45,300

By an agreement between the Government, the City Council and the Queen Victoria Memorial Committee, the City Council, assisted by the Government and Beit Trustees, have agreed to erect a public library in King's Crescent in the near future, and will take over all the assets and liabilities of the Queen Victoria Memorial Library.

**Somerset West.** *Public Library.* The new library building was opened by Mr. J. H. Hofmeyr, M.P., on 4. May. In the course of his speech Mr. Hofmeyr said : "How stands it with literature in South Africa to-day? We have considerable advantages. We have a great diversity of natural beauty, that appeals to the aesthetic sense. We have a multiplicity of problems, and that appeals to the intellectual faculty. These are two essential factors in the building up of a nation's literature."

**South African Library for the Blind.** *Grahamstown.* The extensive *Annual report* from Grahamstown, as usual, makes illuminating reading. We cull from it the following :— There are over 7,000 Braille and Moon type volumes on the shelves and over 100 talking books. The machines for the latter cost about £6, and Sir Thomas Graham in his presidential address suggested that generous people might come forward and subscribe for more machines . . . Over 5,600 book packages were posted during the year . . . A bequest of £50 was received from the estate of the late H. E. R. Sherry, and £250 from that of Mr. Miller (of Messrs. A. G. Blake and Miller) . . . There are 223 European readers, and 13 Non-Europeans, for whom a stock of books is being built up . . . In March the Afrikaans Braille Committee met in Bloemfontein. Mr. B. Kruger attended as representative of the Library. The Committee had to come to a final agreement on certain contractions before the last proofs of the Afrikaans Braille Primer were returned

to England. The Primer, compiled by Mr. Vaughan, was costly to produce as it combines Braille and ink print. It is now complete and can be bought at the Worcester School for the Blind at 3s. 6d. per copy. The first volume of the Gospels, Epistles and collects in Xhosa Braille has been sent to Velile and the Library is waiting to hear what he says about it before asking the National Institute for the Blind to complete the arduous task . . . One of the readers bought a pack of playing cards, brailled for the Library by Mr. Meaker.

*Talking books.* In 1938, 8,321 records were sent out, an increase of 5,000 over the previous year. 56 were broken in transit. The Sound Recording Company in England are doing their utmost to prevent breakages. They have improved the postal fibre cases and they are experimenting with flexible records. These are less liable to break, but are more expensive to produce . . . The number of "listeners" has increased from 26 to 37 and in addition records are sent to two societies . . . In December, 1937, Toc H asked if a machine were provided for the blind lepers at Westfort, Pretoria, whether the Library would send them records. It was decided that rather than run any risks, the Library would make a grant for the purchase of records to be the property of the Leper Institute. The National Institute for the Blind, London, agreed to supply second-hand records at a third of the cost price . . . Following on the recommendation made by the Interdepartmental Committee on Libraries, the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Natal are including grants to the Library for the Blind on their forthcoming estimates, in support of the Cape.

### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

**The Book Beautiful.** A very attractive article, entitled *Building the book beautiful*, which all students of bibliography would do well to read, appeared in *The Junior bookshelf*, v. 2: 175-82, July, 1938.

**The Art of the Book.** The Bureau of Adult and Visual Education of the Pretoria Technical College held a very successful exhibition on *The Art of the Book and its Illustration* from 11. to 29. August. The theme of the exhibition was the Book as a Work of Art. The development was traced from the early handwritten parchment manuscript, with elaborate hand-painted illumination, to the fine products of modern printing.

Many aspects of style in written and printed type, bookbinding and covers, and the manifold varieties of illustration were shown. These ranged from Persian, Indian, early English, German and French manuscripts to rare and beautiful examples of the printed book of to-day. Separate exhibits aimed to show something of the technical processes of printing and book illustration.

At the opening of the exhibition Professor J. P. R. Wallis gave an address on *The Book through the Ages*, and throughout the duration of the exhibition Dr. Stein-Lessing conducted tours and lectures.

**Library of Congress Depository Catalogue.** The Library of Congress at Washington has presented a complete set of its catalogue cards to the National Central Library in London, where it will be available to students for consultation. It is the only set of this catalogue in Great Britain. (John Rylands Library. *Bulletin*, v. 22: 322, Oct. 1938).

### PERSONALIA

**CASE**—Miss N. Case, formerly of the Grahamstown Public Library, has been appointed Librarian at the Grahamstown Training College.

**McLOUGHLIN**—Miss M. E. McLoughlin, formerly Librarian of the Durban Law Library, died early in the year.

**McPHERSON**—Miss E. L. McPherson, for many years Librarian of *The Star*, Johannesburg, retired recently.

THE LIBRARY PARTNERSHIP :  
CONTACTS BETWEEN THE LIBRARIAN AND  
THE PUBLIC<sup>1</sup>

*by*

ELIZABETH HARTMANN

At the present time, when the world is again harrassed by conflict of aims leading to destruction and suffering, I think we librarians, in common with everyone, must be speculating on the causes of this calamity, and asking ourselves whether librarians in the past might have contributed anything towards preventing it, and what, at this stage, we can do, however humble, to ameliorate the position and to diminish the possibility of future catastrophe.

Permanent prosperity, contentment and progress, both for the individual and for society as a whole, can only come when man in the mass has come to think clearly and sanely. But what is sane thinking? It is in the first place thinking based on sound knowledge. As a schoolchild resents restrictions because he has no knowledge of the things that make restrictions necessary, so adults oppose official regulations if they have not sufficient understanding of civic affairs to judge whether these regulations are just or not. And we all know how easily the mass is swayed by fine-sounding political war-cries, however false these may be.

Those who know next to nothing of the world at large take it for granted that there is nothing to know, that things are and must be as they appear to them at first sight. Only when they begin to find out that there is more to it than they had been aware of, do they realize that there may be more still, and ever more. It is for us to awaken that realization, and to provide as complete knowledge as possible when once the desire is roused.

It requires an extensive knowledge of men and affairs, as well as of books and other sources of information, to judge more or less when one's knowledge of a particular subject is sufficient to justify the pronouncement of an opinion. The librarian spends his time among sources of information, tracking down facts. After many a wild-goose chase through encyclopaedias,

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<sup>1</sup> Paper read before the Transvaal Branch of the S.A.L.A. at the University of the Witwatersrand on 13. September, 1939.



handbooks, reports, and many an unexpected find, he knows fairly confidently what and how much he may expect to find on any topic, and where. Consider, for instance, how little the average man knows about laws, ordinances, and other official publications, and how he fights shy of the very facts which govern all his own interests as a citizen. Incidentally, if these official publications were denuded of their antiquated legal jargon, and written in a language intelligible, without a half-comprehended interpretation by an expert, to the mass of the population whose lives they regulate, they would better fulfil their purpose.

The library as I see it is a partnership between the librarian (and when I speak of librarian I imply of course the entire library staff) and the public, placing the librarian's knowledge of knowledge at the disposal of each individual citizen.

This conscious collection of facts about a subject in which we happen to be interested at any particular time is only one phase of our reading. The other is our pleasure-reading, which more closely concerns the majority of people. From this type of reading we do absorb a considerable amount of fact. But its value from the point of view of my thesis lies even more in that it develops the second essential of sane thinking—a good perspective and a sound sense of values. The pure, spontaneous pleasure that we derive from a good story is in itself sufficient justification for reading it. But most reading has an added value with which I am more concerned here. Through it our minds are made receptive for impressions in real life. It provides a bridge, a common means of communication, between us and people who, but for our reading acquaintance with them, would be strangers to us, whose line of thought, whose reactions, are incomprehensible, association with whom might mean nothing but misunderstanding and disharmony, or at best complete indifference. Books like *I am black*, whatever their literary merit, do make one see that the Native is no mere semi-animate creature, but that he has his thoughts and feelings, and is sensible to justice and injustice in much the same way as we ourselves are. And one cannot read *Ampie* without giving more serious thought to the Poor Whites in our midst.

So much for our reading in relation to other people. It also has a great influence on our relations with ourselves. The man with a well-stored mind will always find in it some thought to temper his sorrow or his anger, to encourage him in his despair, to brighten his indifference, to increase his pleasure, or to save him from premature rejoicing which might be doomed to disappointment.

Much depends on the attitude of mind in which we read, and on the nature of the reading matter itself. A good many people, most perhaps, put their own interpretation on a book, judge it by preconceived standards,

They make no serious attempt to see the writer's point of view, and condemn him as being untrue or biased because his conception does not agree with their own. The wider one has read, certainly, the better one is able to judge the real value of any book. Even so, a great many people will never read with an entirely open, impartial mind. I am afraid that is human nature, and the librarian cannot do very much about it. But he can do something. The greater the merit of the book, the more convincingly it is written, the better it is based on accurate fact, the greater chance it has of bringing a message to the unconverted, of adding something really new and valuable to the mental stock-in-trade of the reader. By bringing the more meritorious books to the notice of would-be readers, the librarian can do much to develop an open public mind.

I am quite aware of current opinion against the librarian's posing as censor or attempting to influence the minds of readers by imposing his personal preferences on them. But surely there are certain standards of intrinsic value, independent of any personal opinion. And in any case the librarian's judgement is based not on personal evaluations, but on a careful comparison of reviews and on the application of general tests of authenticity, accuracy and psychological appeal. The librarian who cannot apply these tests impartially has no claim to the position he holds.

A large percentage of people are mentally lazy, particularly in this country, where conditions have for centuries encouraged physical activity rather than mental. Some people will always remain so, more or less, but many of them would certainly respond if the stimulus were given. Apart from the acknowledged inadequacy of our libraries, one of the most serious causes of the appalling lack of reading interest in this country is the almost universal ignorance about such facilities as do exist. How many people daily pass by their town library with complete indifference—people who would derive a great deal of satisfaction from using it, if the idea were only suggested to them.

This intellectual inertia is the cause of many of the malconditions in the world to-day. Yet everyone, I think, has in his make-up some chord which responds to the positive qualities of life, to the good, the beautiful and the noble. In this complicated twentieth century it may be difficult to strike that chord. But if librarians apply themselves earnestly to the task of finding it, they will make no mean contribution to the building up of a happy, sane-thinking world.

It is a colossal programme. But in the very immensity of the task lies the goad which urges us on. We must give ourselves serious reckoning of what we are really aiming at, and we must continually subject our own work to the searchlight of criticism to make sure that it is truly answering our purpose.

I shall go on now to talk about some overseas libraries which struck me as working successfully in the direction I have indicated.

### *Atmosphere*

There is need, first of all, of creating a friendly, bookish atmosphere. A bright, cheerful aspect in the material equipment, and a friendly attitude on the part of the staff, at once put the reader in a cheerful, receptive mood. This atmosphere is very successfully created by most of the devices I shall mention later on.

Two of the most striking examples of general atmosphere that I encountered were at the Public and University Libraries in Evanston, a small residential town about twenty miles from Chicago. As I entered the Public Library, my attention was immediately caught by the new-book corner off the entrance hall. The shelves were painted white, and the books were arranged, not in conventional rows, but scattered about in friendly fashion, some lying flat, and others opened to show some fine pictures. A vase of flowers was placed on the shelves, and a small table and a few armchairs were nearby. One felt that one was walking into a sitting room where a friend had laid out some newly acquired treasures to show off and talk about.

The Library is a small building that is far from modern. But within the limits of its four small walls it is so organized that it resembles a private club library more than the usual run of public libraries. I shall mention only the little roof garden, improvised over a projecting ground floor room. Here readers can curl up in deckchairs in the shade of the surrounding trees, and lose themselves in their books.

Northwestern University, in the same town, has a variation on the roof garden theme in the shape of a proper library garden, running round two sides of the building. A high stone wall shuts out the disturbances of the outside world, and rustic seats are scattered about among the shrubs, trees, and flowers—a perfect setting for quiet reflection and communion with books.

Indeed, throughout this library one senses the mind of the librarian and his staff at work, the mind of the scholar with a genuine love of books and a fine human sympathy—qualities which have been subtly infused into the whole atmosphere of the place. The librarian's room, lined with books and tastefully furnished, resembles a private study rather than an office. Throughout the building the woodwork toning with the stonework of the walls, with just the right amount of decorative carving, creates an atmosphere of refined dignity.

### *Browsing Rooms*

A particular type of atmosphere is created by the browsing room, found in practically every university and college library in the States. Its

purpose is essentially to provide an opportunity for leisurely reading, untrammelled by any suggestion of the classroom or the study. Details of administration vary. Some contain only classics of literature, others current books as well. Some allow borrowing, others do not. All, I think, make it a rule that no note-books or study books of any kind are to be taken into the room. With their couches and easy chairs, reading lamps, pictures, and other art objects they certainly invite one to spend one's free half-hours browsing about.

Columbia University in New York has an elaborate browsing room, with a full-time staff. These spend a great deal of time cutting out and posting up reviews, arranging book exhibits, such as the most popular books of the year, and otherwise rousing interest in books.

It is interesting to see the browsing room idea spreading to the public library, notably at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. I quote a few excerpts from a description of the room in a recent number of *The Library journal*:—"There has been a long-felt need in the Library . . . to bring together the classics of literature, history, philosophy and the social sciences, along with the many distinguished novels, so that they will not be obscured by the many lesser titles which are found in and are necessary to a public library. It was therefore decided to develop a collection which would make people want to read for the sake of reading, to enjoy books that were not necessary to their jobs. The Gillespie Room is for the reader who seeks a deeper understanding and a better appreciation of life through the great minds which have gone before him. It is also for the person who likes to read for the pure pleasure of it . . . It was feared at the outset that the simple luxury and comfort of the Room would attract loafers and leave too few seats for those who really would appreciate and use it as intended. There has, however, been no such problem; readers appreciate and understand the Room for what it is, and use it accordingly. Its quiet dignity has in fact served by example to improve the general discipline of the whole Lending Division." There are about 3,000 titles, all duplicates of titles in the general collection. Apart from literary classics, and such non-fiction classics as De Kruif's *Microbe hunters*, Jeans's, *The Stars in their courses* and suchlike, "the imaginative, the whimsical, and novels for sheer entertainment, also, were given their place."<sup>1</sup>

#### *Book Displays and Exhibits*

Topical displays are a feature very extensively used to present to readers new and alluring points of view, which would not have occurred to

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<sup>1</sup> *L.J.* 64 : 352-53, 1. May 1939.

them of their own accord, but which may immediately capture their interest when suggested to them. So many people complain that "there is nothing interesting to read in the library". Their trouble is that they don't know where to begin. They have no clearly defined interests, no mental life with a waiting list of subjects about which they want to read. They may be vaguely interested in philosophy, or sociology, or art. But the books all look equally uninteresting standing in monotonous rows on the shelves—the same monotonous rows where they could not find anything interesting last week, or the week before, or the week before that. One author means much the same as another, and they may have to scan row upon row of more or less meaningless titles—*A Guide to philosophy*, *A Text-book of ethics*, *Theory and practice of international relations*—before they strike something really promising such as *How to be happy though human*, *I married a German*, or *All this and heaven too*.

I saw a great many libraries in America where the reader could come with eager expectation week after week, and be sure of finding something new to tempt his mental palate. The most impressive of all, perhaps, of the limited number I saw, was the Cleveland Public Library, with Toronto, Los Angeles, and the Enoch Pratt Library at Baltimore, close seconds.

At Cleveland quite a large proportion of the books are removed from their ordinary places on the shelves, and arranged by subject in special display stands. These stands have a poster holder along the top, the length of the stand (three feet) and about one foot high. On this the subject of the display is written in decorative lettering in colour, and an appropriate picture or quotation added. One stand, for instance was labelled "SPEED" in winged letters, and on it were collected a selection of books on various means of transport. At the beginning of spring many libraries featured books on gardening. Current events, anniversaries, and the like, lend themselves well to such display.

Apart from these groupings many of the ordinary tier guides take the form of posters. The geography shelves, for instance, might be headed by an invitation to "Travel to Europe with books", with a picture of Alpine mountaineers.

Instead of the books themselves, posters and jackets only may be displayed. I have a picture of such a display in connexion with the showing of a film on Alfred Nobel, announcing books in connexion with peace and other ideals for which Nobel worked.

Another form of display is the show case. These cases may be let into passage walls, or fixed outside the building. The latter, of course, is more effective in catching the attention of people who would not normally even enter the building. Enoch Pratt has twelve large display windows right



along the street front. Here book displays are arranged such as one might see in a bookshop window. When I was there they were showing among others :— "The Negro moves ahead", with a pictorial background, and a display of books on the subject ; one on Neon signs, featuring an actual sign and a number of books on them ; and an exhibit entitled "As others see us", showing publicity material about the Library.

The Cleveland Library has an arrangement with the local museum whereby the latter lends museum specimens such as groups of mounted birds, fish and small animals, which are exhibited in conjunction with books about them.

The value of bookish exhibits was borne in upon me particularly in the Library Museum at McGill University—a collection of specimens exhibiting the development of the arts of record. Here in the cases are fragments of Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions on stone and on papyrus rolls ; Babylonian clay tablets of all shapes and sizes ; Greek papyri ; Chinese prayer boards, with inscriptions carved out of the wood ; a fine array of Indian palm-leaf books. What ingenuity early man exercised in his effort to communicate with his fellows and keep records of his doings, how urgent it was for him to do so. Yet how we take for granted the easy written communication of to-day.

These frequently changing displays and posters create a most refreshing atmosphere of aliveness. One feels the presence of a staff which knows the books—their value and their appeal. Striking an exhibit in which one is specially interested, one feels a bond of sympathy with the assistant in charge who appreciates one's taste so well—and the partnership is sealed.

In the universities I saw different types of displays. Several had stands marked "Weekend reading", on which every Friday a new selection of worth-while books from the general stock was displayed. Brown University set aside a whole tier of "Good old books", with a larger selection of books once popular but jostled aside by the flood of new publications. As an experiment they were having a lecturer in English to sit about in the vicinity of the collection, so that students could discuss the books with him if they wished.

#### *Departmentalization*

Another university practice which is gaining ground in the public libraries is so-called departmentalization. This means that the whole organization is divided into subject groups, such as Business and Commerce, Sociology, History and Travel, Literature, Art. Each has its own room, where all the material on the subject is brought together—reference and lending material, pamphlets, cuttings, possibly picture collections and

lantern slides—instead of having separate general collections of these different kinds of material. This makes it much easier for anyone interested in a special subject to have access to all available material. He can move about easily from the book he is dipping into, to a periodical referred to, to an encyclopaedia, or to an illustration. He can collect all this material on his table much more readily than when it is scattered in different rooms.

Ideally there is a general reference room in a central position, with a general catalogue of all departments in or near it. Then each department has in addition a catalogue of its own material.

The greatest advantage, however, is that it makes for more expert staff service. Each department has its special assistants. Mostly they are graduates in the particular subject in their charge. Even if they are not, long experience in working with the material in a particular field is bound to make them more helpful in that field than if they had spent the same time acquiring a more casual acquaintance with the entire stock of the library. Most of you will know, I think, that in both American and European university libraries it is quite usual to have several people with a doctor's degree on the library staff.

To attain maximum results the library building must be specially planned. The Enoch Pratt Library, the Rochester Public Library, and the Wilmington Public Library, all built on essentially the same plan, represent the best so far evolved. I have brought a rough plan of the Enoch Pratt ground floor to make it clearer how the scheme works.

Many older buildings are being adapted to the scheme, and the librarians are enthusiastic about the results, in spite of the inevitable drawbacks in a building not specially planned.

The idea has taken root in the British Isles too. Mr. Savage at the Edinburgh Public Library, was very pleased with his experiment, and said that on the one hand the assistants developed greater keenness and responsibility when in charge of their own section, and on the other, the public began to know that they could rely on special assistants who knew what was what.

This system further lends itself well to all sorts of specialized services. The Fine Arts Department at Edinburgh provides drawing easels for copying pictures, and it has a very fine collection of art reproductions, which are allowed to circulate in special portfolios. Special indexing work, which I shall mention again later, can also be carried on much more satisfactorily in separate departments than in one large general library.

It is expensive to run a library on these lines. It requires a fair amount of duplication of stock and equipment as well as larger staffs. Even overseas complete departmentalization is advocated only for large libraries, and it

would not be to any extent practicable in this country. But there are many ideas behind it that we can well bear in mind. In the University Library here, for instance, we are trying to make each assistant responsible for a particular subject or group of subjects. She keeps an eye on the tidying of the shelves in her section, and should make herself more or less familiar with the nature of the books. She regularly scans the more important periodicals in her field, partly to know what is being written, and partly to follow up announcements and reviews of new publications. We try to set aside an hour a week on each assistant's time-table to be devoted to such reading. (Stanford University allows an hour a day!) In theory, then, the whole staff knows to whom to turn for inside information on any subject. In practice I am afraid we are under present conditions too rushed to carry out the idea systematically, but I feel sure it would bear good fruit if we were able to do so.

### *Advisory Service*

I saw several interesting practices adopted to help to make the staff more familiar, not only with the titles and class numbers of the books and the colour of the binding, but with the meat between the covers. It is a common practice to hold regular staff meetings at which new books are discussed. At Los Angeles special review cards are used, which are filled in by the assistants after reading new books. These are ruled for comments under various headings, such as plot, setting, characterization, literary merit and others—not without an American tendency to hair-splitting! These reviews are discussed at the meetings, and then filed for any members of staff to refer to.

The most thorough-going example of this kind of thing I came across at a Children's Library in Amsterdam. It is purely a Children's Library, quite small and run by a private association. Apart from the Children's Library itself there is a non-circulating model collection where adults can choose books for children, and discuss them with the staff. Such a service is quite common in English and American libraries, but the librarian at Amsterdam approached the thing from rather a different angle. A very special effort is made to suit the book to the reader, and to this end the staff is required to know the contents of the books very thoroughly indeed. Practically every book is discussed. Not only do they outline the contents, but they consider such things as: Is the book purely recreational or is there a moralizing element? Is it likely to have a particular appeal or otherwise for children from any particular social class? Is there anything that might offend the religious feelings of the child or its parents (an important consideration in Holland)? Is there anything that might alarm a sensitive child or bore a lively one? This equips the assistant with a very thorough under-

standing of what she has to offer. The aim is not to dictate but to advise. "If your child is of such a nature", says the assistant, "I would suggest this book, because it deals with such and such a subject in a particular way. But you might prefer this one, because . . ." and so on. The librarian's special knowledge is placed at the disposal of the client, but the final choice lies with the client himself.

It is appropriate here to mention the Readers' Adviser, found in so many American libraries. This is a special assistant on duty to confer with anyone who wishes to do so about his reading, and very careful attention is given to advise him on the books most likely to suit his particular requirements. It is a vital service, but I shall not expand on it here, because there is a very exhaustive article on it in the last number of *South African libraries*.

(To be concluded)

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